



M E D I A R E L E A S E
STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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WALKER BRANCH HIKE SLATED FOR MAY 17
OUTING WILL HIGHLIGHT AREA'S DRAGONFLIES AND WILDFLOWERS

Nashville, Tenn. - The Department of Environment and Conservation's Division of Natural Areas will host a guided hike at Walker Branch State Natural Area in Hardin County near Savannah on May 17. Participants should meet at 9 a.m. in the parking lot of the Tractor Supply Company, located at 195 Water Street in Savannah.

Hike leaders Allan Trently, David Withers and Richard Connors will take participants on a moderately strenuous but slow hike through the hills, seeps and springs of Walker Branch State Natural Area. This three- to four-hour tour will highlight the region's incredible biological diversity. Participants can expect to see impressive displays of wildflowers and myriad dragonflies - along with birds, crayfish and other woodland wonders.

"The upland seeps provide a significant breeding habitat for dragonflies and damselflies," Trently said. "An astonishing 37 species of these taxa have been identified at Walker Branch, including Laura's clubtail, harlequin darter and treetop emerald."

Participants should bring water and lunch, and they should wear appropriate footwear and dress in layers. They also should wear long pants and be prepared to get wet as they venture into the seeps. Reservations are required for the guided hike and can be made by contacting David Withers by phone at (615) 532-0431 or by e-mail at david.withers@state.tn.us by May 15.

Walker Branch is a 225-acre natural area in the West Tennessee Uplands. The preserve straddles the floodplain of the Tennessee River with its steep hills, which rise abruptly to 225 feet and form the adjacent uplands. Seeps occur along the lower and middle slopes, draining into the many small spring-fed sand and gravel-bottomed creeks at the base of the hills. These seep-fed creeks flow in and out of the marshes and swamp forests. This lush natural area supports a variety of sedges, rushes and ferns, including state rare and endangered plant species like the lake-bank sedge and lamance iris.

The hike at Walker Branch is part of a series of monthly, guided field trips to Tennessee State Natural Areas offered by the department's Division of Natural Areas. Tennessee has 79 designated State Natural Areas throughout the state, covering approximately 110,000 acres of ecologically significant lands. More information about Tennessee's natural areas program, including a complete list of all natural areas and scheduled field trips, can be found at <http://tn.gov/environment/na/>.

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